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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 21 March 2017

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 21 mars 2017

Standing Committee on
Government Agencies

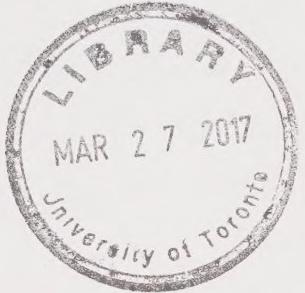
Comité permanent des
organismes gouvernementaux

Intended appointments

Nominations prévues

Chair: Cristina Martins
Clerk: Sylwia Przezdziecki

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Tuesday 21 March 2017

The committee met at 0901 in committee room 2.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Good morning, everyone. Welcome to today's committee on government agencies.

Before we begin our intended appointments review, our first order of business is to consider two subcommittee reports. The subcommittee report dated Thursday, March 9, 2017: Would someone please move adoption of the report? Mr. Gates.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Good morning. Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Good morning.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I move the adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, March 9, 2017.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Thank you. Any discussion? All in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried.

The second subcommittee report is dated Thursday, March 16, 2017. Would someone please move adoption of the report? Mr. Gates.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I move the adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, March 16.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Thank you very much. Any discussion? All in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MS. JO-ANNE POIRIER

Review of intended appointment, selected by third party: Jo-Anne Poirier, intended appointee as member, Ontario Educational Communications Authority (TVO).

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): We'll now move to the appointments review. We have two intended appointees to hear from this morning. We will consider the concurrences following the interviews.

Our first intended appointee today is Jo-Anne Poirier, nominated as member, Ontario Educational Communications Authority (TVO). Please come forward and take a seat at the table. Bienvenue. Merci. Welcome. Thank you very much for being here this morning.

You may begin with a brief statement, if you wish. Members of each party will then have 10 minutes to ask

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES
ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Mardi 21 mars 2017

you questions. Any time used for your statement will be deducted from the government's time for questions, and once we get to questions, it will begin with the third party. Thank you, Ms. Poirier.

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I really appreciate the opportunity to come and speak to you briefly about the potential appointment to TVO.

My name is Jo-Anne Poirier. I have grown up in the city of Ottawa. My experience professionally includes the private sector, the municipal sector and the not-for-profit sector. In addition to that, I have extensive governance experience. A few examples would be that I was on the LHIN board for six years, I am currently the vice-chair of the Ottawa Board of Health, and I am also the chair of finance and audit at the CHEO hospital board and a board director with Calian.

What I would hope to bring is my passion for education and youth. An example of that would be in my last professional appointment, when I was chief executive officer of Ottawa Community Housing. I created a foundation for youth in our communities to break the cycle of poverty and obtain an education. When I look at the mandate of TVO and I look at my professional and personal experience, I find that there would be a really good fit and that I would hope to contribute on a host of fronts.

In addition to this, I'm also completing my ICD designation—the Institute of Corporate Directors—and I'm quite passionate about good governance and bringing that rigour to help steer an organization.

I will leave my comments there, and be open to and very happy to answer any questions you may have.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Thank you, Ms. Poirier. We will now begin with questions from Mr. Gates.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Really? I guess I'll just say good morning. How are you?

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: Good morning.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'll get my marbles together here. I was expecting you to go first; I don't know why. But anyways, I've got 10 minutes, so we're good.

I will mention that you talked about education and youth. I know how important that is to everybody in the province of Ontario. But I've been up since 7 o'clock this morning, answering phone calls about a lockout down in Niagara for our teachers. I just thought I'd get that on the

record, that it's a sad day for the province of Ontario when we're locking out our teachers in the province of Ontario. It has nothing to do with you, I guess, but you did mention the importance of education and youth, and I agree 100%. Today is a bad day down in Niagara for education, for sure.

I'll start with some of the questions here. Don't feel slighted by this; I do this every week. Have you ever donated to the Liberal Party?

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: There were instances, when I was the CEO of Ottawa Community Housing, that receptions would be held where we wanted to have an opportunity to have conversations, where we might have donated in order to attend the event. But personally I've never been involved in any political party.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Okay. So you've never donated to a candidate or anything like that?

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: No.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Okay. Would you like to?

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: My professional—

Mr. Wayne Gates: Listen, I'm just throwing that out. It's—

Interjection: Lack of sleep.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's the lack of sleep. I just thought I'd throw that out.

But you did touch on something. Although you didn't talk for the full 10 minutes or give us more of an idea, you did talk about something that, again, I think is really important with kids. You talked about the cycle of poverty. Maybe you could explain what you mean by that, because I think in today's society, with poverty and mental health, with our young people, it might be something I'd like to hear.

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: Absolutely. What I came to realize during my job at Ottawa Community Housing was that the way to break the cycle of poverty is to give people the tools and the education.

At times, if people don't have the same opportunities, then they're not exposed to the environment where education is promoted. A lot of those difficulties are caused by lack of finances. So when I was at Ottawa Community Housing, I created a foundation where we created bursaries where people would have to apply. We made sure that the criteria were things that we wanted to model in terms of good behaviours. For example, a youth would have to prove that he or she was involved in volunteerism in the community, as part of the criteria. We were trying to send out the message that giving back starts immediately.

We have found that through mentoring programs and bursaries, that has created an environment where people are more likely to end up applying to community college and university.

As well, we created this program called Youth Futures. It was a mentoring program, so that students would be less intimidated, shall we say, to actually go into community college and university, and apply and be successful.

We believe that that is one of the major keys to breaking the cycle of poverty.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate that. You did touch on volunteering. I think everybody around the room and everybody in here knows the importance of volunteering, but ultimately the importance of young people volunteering. All our service clubs are really being taken care of by people my age. We do need young people, so I'm glad you're putting that into their young minds, to say that volunteering is so important for the overall health of our community.

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: Absolutely.

Mr. Wayne Gates: In 2013, after a reduction in government funding, TVO cancelled several popular programs and announced the cut of up to 40 jobs. Does the witness believe that the recent funding cuts to TVO will have a negative impact on the organization moving forward?

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: I think that what you have to look at is what the government priorities are. As well, the one thing I would hope to bring to the TVO board is looking for alternate sources of funding.

For example, I was vice-president of United Way resource development for six years, so I know that governments all over, at every level, are strained for revenue. I think that one of the new realities of every organization is looking for alternate sources of funding.

Something I would hope to offer as a volunteer is the knowledge and experience that I've acquired in terms of developing those cases for support through corporate sponsors and donors.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I will agree with you on government priorities if you'd tell me what they were. I've been trying to figure that out myself for a while.

I will congratulate you on the United Way. I was a campaign chair twice for United Way down in Niagara. I enjoyed it immensely. I enjoyed working with the volunteer groups.

As far as governments with their money, I'm not sure I can agree with you that we don't have enough money. I actually believe that it's how we're dividing up the pie. It could be distributed a little more equally than it currently is. That's some of the problem for all of us.

0910

You didn't touch on the job loss. Any feelings on the 40 jobs that were lost at all?

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: I can't comment on it because I wasn't on the board at the time. I think organizations—for myself at VON, for example, we had to financially restructure.

Even not-for-profit organizations have to constantly look at different ways of getting the job done, so I can't comment on that specific instance, but I know that it's incumbent upon every organization to look at technology, to look at different ways of getting the job done and look for creative ways to look at your resource allocation and resource utilization.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Do you watch TVO?

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: I do occasionally.

Mr. Wayne Gates: So do I; that's why I thought I'd ask. I actually enjoy it immensely.

It's my understanding that in the past few years, TVO has developed several new products and platforms to increase their digital engagement. Could the witness describe some of the challenges she believes TVO may face as they continue to reshape in a more digital, integrated media landscape?

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: At a high level, how I would respond is that there is growing competition for viewer attention. It's incumbent upon any organization to remain almost ahead of the curve—and it's a fast-moving curve, as you know. I think that's going to be an ongoing challenge: competing for viewer attention and making sure that you maintain not only through the medium you use, but also topical relevance.

Mr. Wayne Gates: What do you think are some of the major challenges to face TVO in the foreseeable future?

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: I would say competition for viewer attention and potentially funding, so looking at alternate sources of funding and being creative in that realm. I think that TVO has a very compelling case for support. It's looking at staying ahead of that curve. Those would be the challenges that I would see.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): You have just over two minutes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: They do have a lot of support in the province of Ontario. There's no question about that—even without Steve.

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: That speaks well.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thanks.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Thank you very much, Mr. Gates. Now we will begin questioning with the government side: Ms. Vernile.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Good morning, Jo-Anne. Thank you very much for being here today and for putting your name forward to serve on this board. I'm looking at your background here. You have many experiences and a very impressive résumé. We're very fortunate to have you even considering joining the board of TVO.

TVO has evolved into a very trusted source of interactive educational content. How do you see it being used now and in the future, in changing times, to reach more young people?

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: Well, I think we have to reach youth where they are, and that means involving them. Involving youth, perhaps having a youth council, and engaging them in figuring out, whether it's in the classroom or on their handheld device, is really looking for—because things are changing so quickly. I think that engaging youth in that regard is going to be extremely important in determining whether we need to look at different medium, different fora for making sure that we remain relevant.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: The buzzword you hear these days always is “disruptive.” How would TVO play into that terminology?

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: Well, again, by engaging youth—one of the things that I've done in past jobs is to

engage youth to get their thoughts, because they are leaders today. We talk about them being community leaders; they already do that, and they have great ideas and probably good advice in terms of what is disruptive and what is going to capture their attention. So I can't speak to specifics today, but I do believe that one of the keys to success is going to be to engage youth.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: You touched previously on the issue of funding, and that's always very present, isn't it, with an organization like TVO. How would you, with your background and your experience, make better use of the current funding that TVO does have?

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: What you want to do is look at the return on your investment, bringing that business rigour and seeing how many people you can reach and what the evaluation of the effect is of the dollars spent and invested.

I also think that reaching out to other stakeholders, there are corporate sponsors that want to realize their corporate social responsibility, and private foundations as well, where education is a very solid tenet or pillar of their strategic plan. So reaching out in that regard and looking for different partnerships I think could help broaden the reach.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: You often see that, too, when you're watching PBS and there's a top-rated program. It's brought to you by a certain corporation or a foundation, right?

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: That's correct.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I don't mean to put you on the spot, but what currently gets the greatest audience on TVO? Do you know what programming?

Mr. Michael Harris: Paw Patrol.

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: Well, I think that TVOKids is well watched, and also The Agenda by Steve Paikin, because it deals with very relevant topics. Those would be, at the face of it—obviously, I would know more once on the board, but those would be the things that I would think right now.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm of a generation where I remember Saturday Night at the Movies. I was a big fan of Elwy Yost. That was a routine every Saturday night in our family.

Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Thank you very much, Ms. Vernile. We're now going to turn the questioning over to Mr. Pettapiece.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Good morning. I was going through the paperwork and what they give us to prepare for this interview. In 2014, TVO had excessive revenues over expenses of about \$5.5 million. In 2015, a year later, they were down about \$4 million. Have you studied any of the revenue drops that have occurred at TVO? Because they have received a lot of awards since then on their programming and stuff like that.

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: No, sir, I can't say that I have.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: All right. It was just a significant drop in one year of revenues, so I thought I'd ask you that.

Certainly when we go into our ridings, at different times we talk to schools or we stop to talk to young folks. We have a trend in schools right now—in fact, I had some people in to see me about it yesterday: the education system and what it is not doing at times. One of the issues that they brought to me was in the trades, where our children have not been offered the opportunities of at least exploring what trades can do for you and what great jobs those are.

I wonder, when you were talking about your strategy to get children out of poverty, was that ever brought up? Were things like that ever brought up, the way the education system was working as far as pointing kids the right way?

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: Well, the Youth Futures program, when I was involved, certainly helped students explore the different venues. We would take them to community college campuses and talk about the programs there—and some were trades—as well as universities, trying to help students figure out what is the best fit for them. I believe that community colleges and universities have now started to collaborate as well on joint degrees so that someone can actually get a trade and potentially a university degree as well. I think that will assist us in the future.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes, and that's good. I'm glad they're starting to do that. But these two gentlemen told me yesterday—and they are both tradespeople. They are both carpenters, actually, who were in to see me. Their point was, maybe it should start a lot sooner. It should start in high school. Then at least the kids are given the opportunity: "Look, if you want to go to university, that's great, but not everybody can do that. There are these jobs here that pay very well." I have two sons with trades, and they're doing fine. They haven't made it back onto the couch at my house, anyway, so I expect they're doing fine.

That's something that these two brought up, that we maybe should start a little earlier than the college and university programs to point these things out.

TVO has won a number of awards. It says here, "Four TVOKids programs received a total of 21 Daytime Emmy Award nominations" in 2016. I wonder if that's something that should be built on to maybe boost revenues to the station, some kind of a selling feature to get people to invest in TVO. What are your thoughts on that?

0920

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: I think it's interesting you say that, because in my current job at VON, when an organization has a strong brand, you look to monetize that brand as a source of revenue. I think that there are many things that we should look at and explore potentially as additional sources of revenue. It's through partnerships—some brands are so strong that they can present a bit of a Good Housekeeping seal of approval, if you will. I think looking at things creatively definitely should be pursued.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Would you consider that part of your work, if you received this position?

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: That would certainly be part of what I would look to offer: some of the things that I have experienced and some of the ideas that I brought to the table.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Okay.

Do you have a question?

Mr. Michael Harris: Yes, thanks. I know that TVO was in just last week or the week before with displays of everything that they had to offer. I often joke with Steve Paikin from The Agenda that he's not on the most popular show, with The Agenda—Paw Patrol is. I'll just leave that. I want that on the record, of course.

One thing: When they were in here, they talked about the program for education through the schools as a voluntary program, where teachers need to take that initiative to sign up and be a part of the TVO program through the schools. I think they said that there's around—I don't know the exact number. But how do you see us increasing the number of teachers in schools that offer that TVO educational programming, to boost the numbers from where they're at right now?

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: I think it would be a matter of sitting down and having a discussion about what the objectives of the exercise are and what needs the teachers see as well, and engaging them in that dialogue. Not knowing the particulars, that's what I would see as at least beginning the conversation and better understanding the objectives and the issues.

Mr. Michael Harris: But in terms of awareness to schools or to have buy-in from school boards to adopt the programming and offer it to parents—I have young children and I thought it was fabulous, what they would offer at home for kids to learn through a variety of different online tools and so forth. But again, it's up to the teacher to take that initiative almost themselves.

How else do you see TVO promoting the educational services and programming and online tools with school boards and teachers to increase the number of families right across the province who take advantage of this great program?

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: Right. Certainly, engaging them in that discussion and I would say engaging the parents as well—because if you look at the time spent at home and the time spent at school, I think it's really about wrapping the student around with that ongoing support, and making sure that the parents are more familiar and more comfortable with technology as well.

Mr. Michael Harris: Okay. Go ahead, Randy.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Mr. Pettapiece again.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes, thank you. Mr. Gates brought up the point about volunteerism. Like he said, most of us have been involved in that type of thing for a long time. I'm a member of a service club for over 30 years right now.

But one of the issues is getting other folks to come into the club or clubs across the country. The fact is that some clubs are folding up in different places because they can't—but I think this starts at a very young age.

Certainly, high schools have tried to promote this, although it's sometimes difficult to get high school students to come out and help us clean the ditches or whatever it is in our home communities.

We had a chap in St. Marys who received an award from the Governor General for 15,000 hours of volunteer service. That goes over a number of years. But he is the exception to the rule.

How would you promote youth being involved in volunteering in their own communities?

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: I know that, in order to qualify to graduate from high school, there is a requirement now—and I believe it's 40 hours of volunteerism?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes, and a lot of them leave it to the last year to get that done.

Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier: The organizations in which I worked, because they were not-for-profit, were often the happy recipients of that volunteer time.

What happens is really interesting. It's choosing a volunteer assignment that's going to be meaningful for them. I think that's important. What we found was that they loved it so much—they felt good about contributing—that they end up exceeding the hours required, because it creates that thirst for contributing to your community at a very young age.

I think it's incumbent upon not-for-profit organizations as well to create meaningful volunteer-engagement opportunities that are going to resonate with the youth.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): You have just over a minute.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: That's fine.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): That's fine? Thank you, Mr. Pettapiece.

Thank you, Ms. Poirier. You may step down. As I said at the beginning, we will consider the concurrence following the interviews.

MS. RUMINA VELSHI

Review of intended appointment, selected by third party: Rumina Velshi, intended appointee as member, Ontario Energy Board.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Our next intended appointee today is Rumina Velshi, who is nominated as member, Ontario Energy Board.

Come forward. Good morning, and thank you for being here today. You may begin with a brief statement if you wish. Members of each party will then have 10 minutes to ask you questions. Any time used for your statement will be deducted from the government's time for questions. When we do begin questioning, it will begin with the government side.

Welcome, Ms. Velshi. You may begin.

Ms. Rumina Velshi: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning, members of the standing committee. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you this morning to discuss my intended appointment as a part-time member on the Ontario Energy Board. I am honoured and excited to have been nominated for this position.

Over the next few minutes, I would like to give you some background information on myself that will help answer the following three questions:

(1) Why am I interested in this position?

(2) Why do I believe I'm a good fit for this role?

(3) What is it that I think I can contribute to the OEB?

Starting with my education, I have an undergraduate degree in civil engineering, a master's in chemical engineering, and an MBA, all from the University of Toronto. I'm a registered professional in the province of Ontario.

Regarding my career, I have spent over 30 years working in various capacities and functions in Ontario Hydro and Ontario Power Generation, from design and engineering to construction to nuclear operations to managing OPG's commercial activities function, my last role in the organization being that of director, planning and control, for the Darlington new nuclear project. I have been involved in the construction of both the Pickering and Darlington nuclear power plants as well as the construction of the high-voltage transmission line from Bruce to Milton.

For the last seven and a half years, my career has shifted from working in a regulated utility to serving on boards and administrative tribunals similar to the OEB. From 2009 to 2011, I was appointed chair of the Employment Insurance Board of Referees. The EIBR is an independent administrative tribunal mandated to provide fair and impartial quasi-judicial hearings of appeals of Employment Insurance decisions. From 2012 to 2015, I served on the Toronto Board of Health, which provided me with an opportunity to set public policies and programs with extensive stakeholder engagement.

In December 2011, I was appointed for a five-year term to serve as a member of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, the CNSC. A few words on the CNSC: The CNSC is Canada's nuclear regulator. There are three main elements to its mandate: regulating the use of nuclear energy and materials to protect health, safety, security and the environment; implementing Canada's international commitments on the peaceful use of nuclear energy; and thirdly, disseminating objective scientific, technical and regulatory information to the public.

The CNSC, like the OEB, is an independent, expert, quasi-judicial administrative tribunal. During my time with the CNSC, I have been involved in all things nuclear in Canada, including uranium mines and mills, nuclear fuel fabrication, nuclear reactors and power plants, the production and use of isotopes in medical and industrial applications, the decommissioning and remediation of nuclear sites, and the safe management of nuclear waste.

There are many parallels between the CNSC and the OEB in their objectives and processes: with respect to reviewing applications for licences according to regulatory requirements; for making appropriate, independent, transparent decisions in enforcing compliance with regulations and licence conditions; and in stakeholder and public—or consumer, in the OEB's case—engagement. The CNSC's arm's-length decision-making authority

ensures that it remains independent from government, licensees and CNSC staff. In fact, each CNSC commission member is independent of one another.

0930

On the volunteer front, I've been very active in two areas in particular: international development, and the promotion of science and engineering careers, especially amongst young girls. I was one of the founding members of Women in Science and Engineering in Canada, a board member and treasurer for Women in Nuclear, and I currently serve as vice-chair on the board of directors of a non-profit organization, Scientists in School.

Getting back to the first two of the three questions I posed at the outset, why am I interested in this position and why do I believe I'm a good fit for this role, I applied for this position because I believe I readily meet all of the qualifications and experience requirements for this position. My experience in the regulated electricity sector and my technical and analytical skills, expertise in adjudication, project management, financial management, stakeholder relations and strategic negotiations position me very well to take on this role. Being a board member on the OEB will give me an opportunity to learn and make a significant contribution to both the organization and society at large.

Regarding my third question, what is it that I can contribute to the OEB: As a commission member on the CNSC, I have consistently demonstrated, and it has been confirmed by the feedback that I have received, the following attributes:

- being objective;
- ability to assess different perspectives and weigh the evidence;
- a team leader and a team player, as hearings and decisions are usually as a panel, thus requiring the ability to listen, respect varying opinions and problem-solve;
- being analytical;
- ability to review a high volume of information, often very complex and technical, synthesize, and test the evidence;
- having excellent communication skills, both oral and written, and the ability to elicit information; and
- working very well with all stakeholder groups, including indigenous groups and members of the public.

I have been a very strong advocate of meaningful public engagement in CNSC hearings as well as in the development of CNSC regulatory documents. The CNSC, which has a robust public participation program, is internationally recognized as a leader amongst nuclear regulators in this area.

These same attributes, competencies and values I can bring to the OEB to support it in meeting its mandate and in tackling the challenges that lie ahead.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to meet you today. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Thank you very much, Ms. Velshi. As someone who has a background in applied chemistry and biology, it's wonderful to see a woman with your background in science here today.

We are now going to begin the questioning with the government side. Ms. Vernile.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Good morning and thank you very much for being here this morning. It's very inspiring to see your background and the work that you have done, in particular in trying to encourage more women to get involved in science, engineering and technology.

We in this government have made a commitment to have 40% women on all of our government boards and agencies by 2019. What more could we be doing to encourage women to get involved in leadership positions?

Ms. Rumina Velshi: Thank you for your warm words, and at the outset as well. I have, as you have seen from my resumé, participated on various non-profit boards and municipal boards as well. Just a year and a half ago, actually, we had a conference that I was a panellist at, along with Ratna Omidva from Diversity, to talk exactly about what you have raised: How do we get more women to participate?

The kinds of challenges that women face—one is lack of awareness of opportunities as they exist, so making that information more accessible and available to them. Having them appreciate what the qualification requirements are and how they can meet them, maybe not as strictly, but in many different ways how you can meet those qualification requirements, because many women have skills and attributes that are so transferable, and they may not feel that they exactly meet them, but it's just very easy to apply them.

I think they need a lot more role models and mentors to help them along the way as well, and a support network when they are there, because sometimes, participating on some of these boards can be a bit overwhelming, a bit intimidating. Having a support network, someone who can help you along and give you reassurance, is also very good. So make them aware of the opportunities, help them and show how they can translate their skills and attributes—it may mean giving them special workshops, sometimes around governance and so on—and help to make sure there are support networks that will help them enjoy and make a meaningful contribution when they do get appointed.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): You have eight seconds.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Well, then, I will take those eight seconds to say thank you, and congratulations to your son, who is now serving as chief of staff for Patrick Brown.

Ms. Rumina Velshi: Thank you.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Thank you very much, Ms. Vernile. We're now going to turn it over here to Mr. Pettapiece.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Good morning. It's something that I talked to the previous appointee about a little while ago, and it has to do with education.

I'll give you an example of what's happening in my riding. There's a company called D&D Automation.

They're a robotics company, and they work all over North America in car plants and whatever. He saw a need for children to learn about this, and he was having difficulty getting qualified people locally to hire. What he has done is he has a competition with elementary school children—grade 7's and 8's, I believe, and early high school—and he gives them a project. They have to build a robot that can do whatever. He has to turn away students now.

I guess the point I'm making here is that—your thoughts on how soon we should be exposing our children to science, certainly, and to these types of things? As I said before, it's sometimes a little late, waiting for a community college to take your direction if you don't have a bit of a background in something. Your thoughts?

Ms. Rumina Velshi: I fully agree with you on that. One of the boards that I have been serving on, Scientists in School, tries to do exactly that. It reaches out to young children, from kindergarten to grade 8, and has workshops that complement the school curriculum, complement what the teachers can afford, by bringing scientists into the classroom, where children can get hands-on experience in doing different, wonderful, exciting things. The whole objective is to spark an interest in science, and that this will be a catalyst for them to then pursue science longer term.

Scientists in School is active mostly in Ontario and in Alberta, has over 25,000 workshops a year and reaches almost 670,000 children. I've attended these workshops and I leave with my facial muscles hurting because I've been grinning in awe as I watch the children get so excited about how science is used in our day-to-day lives.

Getting back to what you asked, I think it needs to start early. They need to see why science is important, how it can be a lot of fun, and have role models who can help them appreciate that scientists aren't always people with funny hair and lab coats—that they're normal, regular people, too.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: One of the things that the owner of this business tries to impress upon these children is that it's okay to fail. Not every child's robot is going to hit the finish line. I have been there a couple of times at both the end and the beginning of the competition—it goes on for a while—and there is no crying going on because somebody lost the competition. He points out to them, "This is why this one won. It did all these types of things."

If I get back to the science business, in my generation—and maybe this is still going on—I know that women were not pointed toward math, science and all that type of thing, and that's too bad. Certainly, you are a perfect example of why that shouldn't have been done. Is this getting better, as far as appointing young women and girls to the sciences in our education system?

0940

Ms. Rumina Velshi: I'm really dating myself because I look back at what the world was like when I first entered university and went to engineering. I was one of three women in a class of 100. When I went into the

workplace, there were no women around. When I worked at the nuclear power plant, they didn't have change room facilities for women, they didn't have radiation-area clothing for women; I had to wear men's clothing, and so on.

We've come such a long way from that. The workplaces are just so much more accommodating for women. When you go to other parts of the world, you realize really how far we have come ahead. I've been very, very active and very passionate about this whole area of encouraging more women in science and engineering.

If you'll bear with me, I'd just like to share a story with you because I'm just so excited about it. I was in Japan last year. It was the fifth anniversary of Fukushima, so it was in my capacity as a CNSC member. We got to talk to many people in the Fukushima prefecture about the impact the horrible accident had had on them. The international community, along with the Japanese government and institutions, is, as part of restitution, trying to encourage more young girls to look at science and engineering. Japan is quite a few years behind Canada when it comes to the increased participation of women in those fields.

They have a workshop that they have organized for July this year where they're going to bring about 50 Japanese high school girls, and they're going to have six women—three Japanese, three from the western world—to be role models and mentors to these girls and get them excited and help them get ready to pursue careers in science and engineering. Earlier this month I was invited to be one of the three western women to go to this workshop/conference. It was a great honour to me but also a great recognition of Canada and what it has done for women in this field.

So yes, there is still lots of work to be done, but we really need to compliment ourselves with all the accomplishments that have also been made.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): You have just over three minutes.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: This is quite an interview, and I'll tell you the reason why. It's sometimes difficult for me to understand things, but you make it very easy to understand what you've been doing and what you've accomplished. Sometimes, after a technical briefing or something, I have to go back and ask somebody what somebody said or what they meant. But you make it very easy for me to understand what you've done and how you've done it and why you've done it, and I appreciate that.

Ms. Rumina Velshi: Thank you.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I think I come probably from a generation—I'm a little older than what you are. We had two classes: One was tech and one was the arts and sciences, and that was it—with the gas jets sitting on the desks. We used to fool around with them in the way we shouldn't have fooled around with them, and all this type of thing.

But I do know that even with us, with the males in the class, if you didn't reach a certain objective, you were

put over here in the tech class just automatically, and that was too bad, because there were a lot of guys—and girls—who have gone on to a big success from when I was at school because they just wouldn't take no for an answer. They went out and did things. But that was at their own initiative; it certainly wasn't the education system. I appreciate what you've done and I want to congratulate you, certainly, on your work.

Ms. Rumina Velshi: Thank you.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): We will now turn it over to Mr. Gates.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm absolutely shocked that for 20 minutes of an interview, nobody mentioned hydro rates in the province of Ontario and how they're unaffordable.

I want to congratulate you on the work you've done with women.

Ms. Rumina Velshi: Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I think it's so important. I'm married. My wife was a principal. I have three daughters, very strong women.

The NDP caucus is the only caucus here at Queen's Park that has more women than there are men within the caucus. That's why we run so well. I just thought I'd throw that out.

But we still have lots of problems. We've got a long way to go. Women in today's society are still paid less than men, doing the same work. We've got a long way to go. Other countries have a lot further to go, but right here in Ontario we still have a long way to go. I wanted to get that out before I started.

You previously sat as a member of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission during the November 2015 Darlington hearings, and expressed some concerns that the fire marshal's office did not engage groups like CELA or Greenpeace regarding nuclear safety. In your opinion, what does good engagement look like between government organizations and stakeholders in the energy and environmental sector?

Ms. Rumina Velshi: Thank you, Mr. Gates. In my opening statement, I mentioned how I have been a very strong advocate of meaningful public engagement, and you've picked an example of where I demonstrated that. Both of those organizations—CELA and Greenpeace—at many of our CNSC hearings and meetings have demonstrated that they have so much value to contribute to emergency management planning in the province of Ontario and for all of Canada.

As the province was updating its nuclear emergency plan, as the CSA was updating its standards, it was very evident to me that both those organizations had a lot to offer as we develop those. What you've read in the transcript and in the proceedings is me encouraging those organizations to get these folks involved—better up front than later on when maybe a lot more things have been carved.

Yes, it was just an example of what I'd mentioned earlier.

Mr. Wayne Gates: A concern for us down in Niagara has been that a judge in the States has said that they can

bring nuclear waste through Niagara. What are your feelings about that, and how safe is nuclear waste for the residents of Niagara, in your expert opinion?

Ms. Rumina Velshi: I think I'll just answer that generally. If it is something that the CNSC has approved, then clearly the risks to members of the public have been shown to be minimal and not of concern. So I would say that they should be reassured that things will be safe.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate that.

Why didn't you seek a second term with the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission?

Ms. Rumina Velshi: It's not that I haven't sought a second term. I don't know if you're aware of the federal appointment process for public appointments. They have introduced a new process, actually very similar to Ontario's, with a lot more transparency and merit-based. They're just very backlogged right now, and they haven't made any appointments in a while. If it happens, it may be down the road.

Mr. Wayne Gates: So it wasn't that you didn't; it was that the timing wasn't right?

Ms. Rumina Velshi: That's correct.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Just a question, maybe, to the Chair.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Sure.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I was noticing that the chair gets paid \$512,000; is that a misprint?

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): That's not this Chair.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Not you? No? You get the same as our other—no, you actually get more.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): There you go.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Is that accurate, that it's \$512,000 for the chair?

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): I saw that as well, Mr. Gates. I'm going to—I don't know, Ms. Fowler, if you have any comments to make.

Mr. Wayne Gates: You can answer that later, just let me know. I just picked that up and I thought, "That's a lot of money." I'm just saying.

It was already said by the Liberals, but I think it's important for me to say it: Your son is currently the chief of staff for the PC leader, Patrick Brown. Is that correct?

Ms. Rumina Velshi: Yes, it is.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I was wondering why those questions were so soft; now I understand that. It's very good.

My question to you—because I think it's important: There is a chance for any party in 2018 to be the government. Would you have any concerns about being biased towards the PCs if Patrick Brown happens to be the Premier of Ontario?

Ms. Rumina Velshi: Absolutely not. As I've said, my track record is that my decisions and my behaviour in all of our public forums have been very objective, very fair and very independent. Never has there ever been a question about that, and I expect that to continue, for me to meet the mandate of the OEB and to serve the interests of Ontarians.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I actually think it's a fair and a reasonable question as well.

The Women in Nuclear website described you as—I'm doing my homework here; I hope you appreciate that.

Ms. Rumina Velshi: I am impressed, yes.

0950

Mr. Wayne Gates: Just so you didn't think I just crawled out of bed and figured this all out at 7:30 this morning.

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I don't have any up here. Sorry.

"The commercial lead from OPG for the procurement of nuclear reactors for the Darlington site as well as responsible for developing and implementing the project management infrastructure for one of the largest mega capital projects in Canada"—it seems that part of your job was to allocate money for ratepayers to spend on nuclear reactors at Darlington.

As you know, the OEB is currently deciding how much ratepayers are going to pay for the refurbishment of nuclear reactors at Darlington. The OEB—I'm reading it slowly; hopefully it's not too long—will have to weather decisions by OPG with respect to if these costly and complex refurbishments are in the interests of consumers.

Should ratepayers worry about the fact that the OEB will be making these decisions when its newest member spent most of her career with OPG, spending ratepayers' money on nuclear mega-projects with a history of cost overruns?

Ms. Rumina Velshi: The information which you got from the website—which is accurate, of course—was for the Darlington new-build project, which, as you know, got cancelled.

The question around rate hearings and rates associated with the Darlington refurbishment is, I think, in front of the OEB right now, so I wouldn't feel comfortable in opining on that.

But I do want to share with you that when I joined the CNSC, there were, I guess, similar concerns: "Here is someone who has come from the nuclear industry. How objective and fair could she be?"

The first panel that I was on that dealt with OPG actually happened to be the environmental assessment approval for the Darlington refurbishment project. There were a few interveners who asked that I recuse myself from that panel for that reason of potential conflict.

At that time it had been over three years since I had left OPG—now it has been over seven and a half years, longer than any cooling-off period that anyone requires—and my career had taken a turn: It was no longer in the industry; it was on tribunals. So I did not recuse myself, because I didn't think it was necessary, and my decision was supported by the chair, as well as my fellow commission members.

I was appointed on the CNSC because of my technical background. What I'd like to share with you, Mr. Gates, is that this was a four-day hearing. At the end of the first day, no one had any concerns. They realized how fortunate it was to have someone who understood the technical

complexity and nuances of the business, who could challenge—as you mentioned, sometimes it's hard to understand what's being said. You get bamboozled, overwhelmed by all the jargon. Someone who actually understands can get behind it. It was of greatest benefit to everyone there, including the licensees, so I don't see that as an issue.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate that. I've only got a minute left, but I want to ask you a question, because of your knowledge. We shut down coal and signed some contracts for wind and solar, but my question is—and I've asked other people this question—could nuclear pick up what was needed after coal plants were shut down?

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): You have just about 30 seconds.

Mr. Wayne Gates: So speak quick, because I think that's an important question.

Ms. Rumina Velshi: Right, yes. I can't answer that. I don't know all the considerations that would have gone into that decision. The only thing I would say is that nuclear is usually baseload, and sometimes you don't need a lot of baseload, so there is room for all kinds of technologies.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I think that's a fair question—without answer. I appreciate it. Thank you.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Thank you very much, Mr. Gates, and thank you, Ms. Velshi. Thank you for being such a trailblazer for women in science and on boards; we talked about that earlier today. That concludes the time allocated for this interview.

We will now consider the concurrence for Ms. Jo-Anne Poirier, nominated as member, Ontario Educational Communications Authority (TVO). Mr. Qaadri?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to—

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Hold on. I think I need to ask you: Would someone please move the concurrence? Mr. Qaadri.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Jo-Anne Poirier, nominated as member, Ontario Educational Communications Authority (TVO).

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Any discussion? All in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried. Congratulations, Ms. Poirier.

We will now consider the concurrence for Ms. Rumina Velshi, nominated as member, Ontario Energy Board. Would someone please move the concurrence? Mr. Qaadri.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Rumina Velshi, nominated as member, Ontario Energy Board.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Any discussion? Yes, Mr. Pettapiece?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Maybe with her background, she could go to the kitchen and get them to do something about this coffee? If that would be all right.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: You want a woman to get coffee for you. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: No, do something about it, the taste of it.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Why is it her responsibility?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: With her scientific background—

Interjections.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Okay, is there any further discussion? All in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried. Thank you, Ms. Velshi.

We now have some deadline extensions to consider here.

Interjections.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Mr. Harris, we're not done.

We have three deadline extensions to consider here today—six, actually. The first deadline extension is for Pareshkumar Jariwala, nominated as member, Grant Review Team, Essex, Kent and Lambton, Ontario Trillium Foundation. Do we have unanimous agreement to extend the deadline to consider the intended appointment of Pareshkumar Jariwala from November 18, 2016, to April 22, 2017? Yes? Okay.

Do we have unanimous agreement to extend the deadline to consider the intended appointment of Kevin Gordon Cleghorn, nominated as member, Criminal Injuries Compensation Board (Social Justice Tribunals Ontario), from November 25, 2016, to April 22, 2017? Do we have unanimous agreement on this? Perfect.

Do we have unanimous agreement to extend the deadline to consider the intended appointment of Norma Lamont, nominated as member, Grant Review Team, Champlain, Ontario Trillium Foundation, from November 25, 2016, to April 22, 2017?

Interjection: Yes.

Mr. Michael Harris: I just have a question. Why are we extending them? Just because we haven't been able to schedule them to come in yet—is that why?

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): That's correct. There will be various reasons. The certificates are expiring later this week, March 23, 2017. For one reason or another, whether it's a matter of scheduling or them not being available, we have to extend the certificate. They have to come in within a month of them being appointed, is my understanding.

Do we have unanimous agreement to extend the deadline to consider the intended appointment of William Greenhalgh, nominated as vice-chair, Public Accountants Council for the Province of Ontario, from November 25, 2016—the certificate expires March 23, 2017—seeking to extend it to April 22, 2017? Do we have unanimous consent?

Interjection: Yes.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Do we have unanimous agreement to extend the deadline to consider the intended appointment of Carol Layton, nominated as member, Ontario Infrastructure and Lands Corp. (Infrastructure Ontario), from December 16, 2016, certificate expiring March 23, 2017, seeking to extend it to April 22, 2017?

Mr. Michael Harris: No.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): No?

Mr. Michael Harris: No.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Okay.

Do we have unanimous agreement to extend the deadline to consider the intended appointment of Kathy Bardswick, nominated as member, Metrolinx? Certificate originally dated December 16, 2016, deadline extension expires March 23, 2017—seeking now to extend it to April 22, 2017.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Yes.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Yes? Perfect. Thank you very much.

Yes, Mr. Bradley?

Mr. James J. Bradley: Chair, what are the implications of a "no"?

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): I'm going to pass that to the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Sylwia Przezdziecki): Without an extension by the committee, once the March 23 deadline passes, the committee will have been deemed to have passed the appointment. Effectively, then the Public Appointments Secretariat will be able to go ahead and—

Mr. James J. Bradley: So the person is appointed?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Sylwia Przezdziecki): Yes.

Mr. James J. Bradley: Okay.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Sylwia Przezdziecki): Without the committee stage.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: He doesn't have to appear before the committee—he or she?

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): She; no.

Mr. James J. Bradley: Okay.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Sylwia Przezdziecki): Right. The deadlines that are being extended are the window of time for the committee to interview the individual.

Mr. Michael Harris: Well, if that's the case, then we want to extend the committee. Can we have that again—ask that question again before we conclude, now knowing that there's clarity on that?

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): There has been a request from Mr. Harris to go back and speak to the nomination of Carol Layton, to actually extend her certificate versus not to extend the certificate. Do we have unanimous consent to go back and revote on that?

Interjections: Yes.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Okay. Carol Layton, nominated as member, Ontario Infrastructure and Lands Corp. (Infrastructure Ontario): certificate originally dated December 16, 2016, extension is to expire March 23, 2017. Do we have unanimous agreement to extend this deadline to April 22, 2017?

Interjections: Yes.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Yes? Okay. Perfect. Thank you very much.

If there is no further business, we're adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1002.



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